



BOROUGH OF BEWDLEY.

ANNUAL REPORT

OF

Medical Officer of Health

FOR

1913.

Bewdley :

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TO THE
Town Council of Bewdley.

BEWDLEY,

MARCH 4th, 1914.

GENTLEMEN,

**Physical
Features.**

The Borough of Bewdley is situated on the West bank of the river Severn and the hills rising from it. It has a river frontage of three quarters of a mile, and extends westward for two miles, with a narrow strip going about a mile further, but the populous part of the town has a river frontage of only about 350 yards, and extends inland about 700 yards, the rest of the area of 2,105 acres being fields, a large amount of woodland, water, and a good many scattered houses.

Population.

The population at the last Census was 2,745 and is probably about stationary.

**Social
Conditions.**

The chief industries in the Borough itself are the various branches of Agriculture and the Timber trade, besides which there are a small Tanyard and Brass-foundry.

In addition to these a large number of the inhabitants, including many boys and girls as soon as they leave school, go to Kidderminster daily to work in the various Carpet and Spinning factories, and a good many men work in the Coal pits at Kinlet and Highley.

Till quite recently the only way to get to Kidderminster was by road, and the fresh air and exercise gained by the three mile walk or cycle ride twice a day was undoubtedly beneficial to the health of the workers

though the exposure to all weathers, and the fatigue of the walk, must have been very trying to the less hardy among them. Some months ago however a service of road Motor Omnibuses was started between Kiddernminster and Bewdley, of which a great number of the workpeople availed themselves, and though there is a great gain in comfort and rapidity of getting to and from their work, it will be interesting to observe whether the general effect on the health of the people will be beneficial or otherwise. I have already heard complaints, especially among the girls, that they are not as well as they used to be when they had to walk.

The Great Western Railway Company have also lately started a Rail Motor Car service which takes the majority of the the colliers to and from the pits, saving them from six to eight miles of road twice a day, which must be of great benefit to them, and is likely to be an inducement to more colliers to wish to live in Bewdley.

Wages on the whole are low, and in many cases uncertain, though the colliers and better class workers in the factories can earn good wages. It is difficult to estimate the average wage, but it is probably little, if anything, over a pound a week for men.

Water Supply.

During the year the Corporation has commenced to supply the Urban District of Stourport with water, and an agreement has been made to supply the Parish of Wribbenhall. To meet this increased demand for water a new bore hole has been made a few yards from the old one, and a more powerful pumping plant is being laid down.

The water from both bore holes has been analysed and pronounced of extremely good quality, and the supply appears to be practically unlimited. Continuous pumping for seventy-two hours, with a yield of 20,000 gallons per hour, produced practically no effect on the level of the water in the bore hole.

River Pollution.

This remains as before.

Sewerage.

Owing to the expenses connected with the supply of water to Stourport, the completion of the Sewerage Scheme for Bark Hill has been temporarily postponed.

**Closet
Accommodation.**

There are now 315 Water Closets in the town, the same number as last year, 88 Pail Closets, an increase of one, and 135 Middens, a decrease of one.

Scavenging.

The remarks I made last year on this head still hold good, except that receptacles for paper, orange peel, etc., have been provided in the streets, which it is to be hoped the inhabitants will get more into the habit of making use of than they do at present,

**Sanitary
inspection of the
District.**

During the year 46 houses have been inspected under the Housing and Town Planning Act by the Sanitary Inspector and myself, and the results entered in the Record Book. The houses, on the whole, were in a very fair condition, the chief defect found being some dampness in the lower rooms. This was generally due to the houses having been built before damp courses were in general use, and I am afraid in some cases it cannot be cured altogether, though in many it can be greatly improved by repairs to spouting, roofs, etc.

Three houses are in such a bad condition that they will have to be dealt with under Sec. 15 of the Act. Of the houses found unfit for habitation in the year 1912, one has been made fit, one is being dealt with under Sec. 15, one has been closed, and closing orders have been made in respect of four more.

Two other houses, which were reported on last year, are still under consideration, the difficulty being the question of removing soil from against the walls, which in one case belongs to a different owner.

In the course of the Inspection, two cases of overcrowding were found, but so far the people have not been able to get other houses.

During the year two houses have been made fit for habitation under Sec. 15 of the Act.

In addition, the Sanitary Inspector has made during the year 549 Inspections, either by himself, or in company with the Medical Officer. He has served 224 notices, written or verbal, and 34 Statutory Notices.

**House
Accommodation.**

No new houses have been built during the year.

The question of House Accommodation is one which the Council will be compelled to face in the near future.

During the last four years twelve cottages, including four for which closing orders have been made, have been closed, and there are several others which will undoubtedly have to be dealt with in due course. Such houses as have been built in the Borough of recent years have practically all been of the better class, not workmen's cottages, and something will have to be done to provide accommodation for the displaced families.

In so far as the present cheap and insanitary cottages attract undesirable strangers to the Borough, I have no doubt, as I have pointed out in previous reports, that the Borough would be better without them; but there remain a good number of natives of the town who are now living in unsatisfactory surroundings because they are unable to get better houses, who should be provided for.

The chief difficulty lies in the low wages of so many of the inhabitants. It appears to be impossible to build cottages profitably at a lower rent than 3/6 to 4/6 a week, and such a rent is beyond the means of a man who is only earning a pound a week, with a family to keep.

It is possible that if such houses were built they would be taken up by the higher paid workers, leaving the existing houses with rentals of 2/6 to 3/- a week for the poorer people, but it is very likely that, with the present facilities for getting to Kidderminster and the coal mines, this class of houses would attract workers

from those places, leaving our poorer labouring classes no better off than they are at present.

It is no part of the duty of the Corporation to speculate in building cheap houses for workers in other districts, however profitable such speculation might be, but it is undoubtedly their duty to do all in their power to provide sanitary houses for the people of the Borough to replace those which the law compels them to close.

The General Purposes Committee of the Council has appointed a small Sub-Committee "to investigate the housing conditions prevailing in the Borough, in order to ascertain whether there is a shortage of working class dwellings, and if, as the result of their investigations, they are of opinion that any shortage exists (which is likely to be of permanent duration) they do ascertain whether land can be acquired at a reasonable price within the Borough, suitable for the erection of dwellings to meet the demand, and further, that the Sub-Committee do prepare for submission to the Council a Building Scheme with a view to such demand being supplied."

Schools. The Schools are now both in a thoroughly satisfactory condition.

Milk Supply. Milk Supply is fairly satisfactory.

Slaughter Houses. Remain as before.

Other Foods. Some samples of Tinned Meats were taken for analysis, but pronounced harmless, and sixteen cases of preserved food were surrendered and destroyed.

Workshops' Act. There are 24 Workshops, including five Bakehouses, on the register. 52 Inspections were made during the year, and five defects found and notices served, one for overcrowding and four for want of cleanliness. In each case the defect was remedied.

Infectious Diseases. During the year two cases of Scarlet Fever were notified, both imported from outside the Borough, one

of which was removed to the Isolation Hospital by private agreement, the other was isolated at home.

Two cases of Diphtheria were notified, both of a very mild type, one of Puerperal Fever, two of Erysipelas, nine of Pulmonary Tuberculosis, including three notified by the School Medical Officers, and one of other Tuberculous disease.

Of the Tuberculous cases two have died, one of them very shortly after she came to live in Bewdley, one, a lodger in the Borough, was removed to the Union Infirmary, and three were sent to the County Sanatorium under the Insurance Act, from whence two returned very much improved in health, the other no better.

One other case, notified in the year 1912, which had left the district, has returned.

The patient for whom the Council provided the shelter last year is much improved in health, and has been in regular work for several months.

Vaccination.

Less than half the children born in the No. 2 District of the Kidderminster Union, of which the Borough forms a part, are now being vaccinated. It is to be hoped that the faith of the Anti-vaccinators in improved sanitation as the sole preventive of Small-pox may be justified.

Death Rate.

During the year 30 deaths were registered in the Borough, giving a rate of 10·92 per 1,000 of the population, a very satisfactory rate.

Of these there were :

	Under 1 year	5
Between 1 year and	5 years	None
„ 5 years	„ 15	1
„ 15	„ 25	1
„ 25	„ 65	12
	Over 65	11
		—
		30
		—

Two deaths of persons belonging to other districts were registered in the Borough, and six of persons belonging to the Borough in other districts. Two persons who died in the Kidderminster Workhouse, who had given insufficient addresses, were assigned to Bewdley by the Registrar General, but, as I have since discovered that neither of them belonged to the district, I have not included them in my figures.

The nett number of deaths of persons belonging to the Borough is therefore 34, giving a rate of 12·38 per 1,000 of the population.

Infant Mortality.

There were 6 deaths registered of children belonging to the district under one year of age, giving a rate of 84·5 per 1,000 children born. This is rather a high rate, but it must be noticed that five of the six died from congenital causes, and only one from acquired disease.

Birth Rate.

There were 71 children born during the year, giving a rate of 29·5 per 1,000 of the population.

Vital Statistics.

Tables of vital statistics are appended.

I remain, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

U. W. N. MILES,

Medical Officer of Health.

TABLE I.

YEAR.	Population estimated to Middle of each year.	BIRTHS.			TOTAL DEATHS REGISTERED IN THE DISTRICT.		TRANSFERABLE DEATHS.		NETT DEATHS BELONGING TO THE DISTRICT.			
		Un-corrected Number.	Nett.		Number.	*Rate.	Of Non-residents registered in the District.	Of Residents registered in the District.	Under 1 Year.		At all Ages.	
			Number.	* Rate.					Number.	Rate per 1,000 Nett Births.		
												Number.
1908	2866	72	72	25.12	30	10.46		5	3	41	35	12.21
1909	2866	74	74	25.81	37	12.87		2	6	81	39	13.60
1910	2866	61	61	21.28	43	15		7	10	163	50	17.09
1911	2745	74	74	26.95	33	12.02		10	5	67	42	15.26
1912	2745	54	54	19.66	31	11.29	1	10	5	92	41	14.93
1913	2745	71	71	29.5	30	10.92	2	6	6	84	34	12.38

* Rates calculated per 1,000 of estimated population.

Total population at all ages, 2745. Number of inhabited houses, 665. Average number of persons per house, 4, at Census of 1911. Area of District in acres (land and inland water) 2,105.

TABLE II.

Cases of Infectious Disease notified during
the year, 1913.

NOTIFIABLE DISEASE.	NUMBER OF CASES NOTIFIED.						
	At all Ages.	At Ages—Years.					
		1 to 5	5 to 15	15 to 25	25 to 45	45 to 65	65 and up- wards
Diphtheria (including Membranous croup	2		2				
Erysipelas	2				1		1
Scarlet Fever ..	2		1		1		
Puerperal Fever ..	1				1		
Pulmonary Tuberculosis ..	9	1	2	3	2	1	
Other forms of Tuberculosis ..	1		1				
Totals ...	17	1	6	3	5	1	1

Kidderminster Borough Isolation Hospital.

Worcester County Tuberculous Sanatoria.

TABLE III.

Causes of, and Ages at Death during the Year 1913.

CAUSES OF DEATH.	All Ages.	Under 1 year	5 and under 15 years	15 and under 25 years	25 and under 45 years.	45 and under 65 years.	65 and up- wards
Phthisis (Pulmonary Tuberculosis)	2				1	1	
Cancer, malignant disease ...	7				2	3	2
Organic Heart Disease	2				2		
Bronchitis ...	3					1	2
Pneumonia (all forms)	2		1	1			
Diarrhœa and Euteritis	1	1					
Congenital Debility and Malformation, includ- ing Premature Birth	4	4					
Other Defined Diseases	7				1	2	4
Diseases ill-defined or unknown	6	1				1	4
Totals ...	34	6	1	1	6	8	12

TABLE IV.

Infant Mortality during the Year 1913.

CAUSES OF DEATH.	Under 1 Week	1-2 Weeks.	Total under 4 weeks.	4 weeks to 3 Months.	Total Deaths under 1 year.
Enteritis ..				1	1
Congenital Malformations		1	1		1
Premature Birth	1		1		1
Atrophy, Debility and Marasmus	1		1	1	2
Other Causes ...	1		1		1
Totals ..	3	1	4	2	6

Nett Births in the Year	}	Legitimate, 69.
		Illegitimate, 2.

Nett Deaths in the Year	}	Legitimate, 5.
		Illegitimate, 1.

1.—Inspection of Factories, Workshops and Workplaces.

Including Inspections made by Sanitary Inspectors or Inspectors of Nuisances.

Premises.	Number of	
	Inspections.	Written Notices.
Workshops (Including Workshop Laundries) ...	52	5
Total ...	52	5

2.—Defects found in Factories, Workshops and Workplaces.

Particulars.	Number of Defects.	
	Found.	Remedied
Want of Cleanliness ...	4	4
Want of Ventilation ...	1	1
Total ...	5	5

4. —Registered Workshops.

Workshops on the Register at the end of the year.			Number.
Workshops and Workplaces	19
Workshop Bakehouses	5
Total Number of Workshops on Register	24